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CASEWORK SERVICE IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

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#### ABSTRACT

The policy-making component of representation in the U.S. and Great Britain has been closely studied and compared, but the constituency's component—the handling of constituent complaints and the protection of constituency interests—is less well understood. This paper considers two questions about the constituency component of representation: how much and what kinds of casework services do MPs as opposed to Congressmen provide, and secondly, what are the statistical determinants of these activities? With regard to the first question, our findings indicate that MPs devote more of their own time and resources to constituency work than do Congressmen. In addition, we identify representatives on both sides of the Atlantic who adopt a more aggressive strategy towards their constituency work. This strategy is manifested by such activities as publicizing successful cases, handling cases which concern local government matters, the frequency of surgeries and the active solicitation of cases. In the second part of this paper, we model these activities as being related to the electoral margin, party and the year the representative was elected. These estimations indicate that casework entrepreneurs in both countries are most likely to be in marginal seats, recently elected and Democrats or Labour.

# CASEWORK SERVICE IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES

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The policy-making component of representation in the U.S. and Great Britain has been closely studied and compared, but the constituency component—the handling of constituent complaints and the protection of constituency interests—is less well understood. While knowledge about this aspect of Congressional representation is growing (Fenno, 1978; Fiorina, 1977; Mayhew, 1974; Macartney, 1975; Cranor and Westphal, 1978; Parker, 1979a, 1979b; Frantzich, 1979; Johannes, 1978; Yiannakis, 1979; Mezy, 1976), there has been relatively less attention to constituency representation in Great Britain (Dowse, 1963; Barker and Rush, 1967; King, 1974a, 1974b) and practically no theoretical or empirical work comparing constituency work across the two systems (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina, 1979a, 1979b).

Why has constituency service in the British system received comparatively less attention? Primarily, it is because the conventional account of British politics does not attribute much significance to this aspect of the MPs job. In part, this skepticism is founded on the widespread belief that observable differences in the constituency effort of MPs are personal and idiosyncratic. R. E. Dowse in his study of MPs and their surgeries, for instance, found no

relation between electoral margin and the frequency of surgeries and concluded that holding surgeries seems to stem from the "genuine desire to win public esteem and to be of service" (Dowse, 1963, 336).

Others maintain that institutional differences are so great that constituency work in Great Britain and the United States are very different phenomena. While American Congressmen might hope to win votes by faithfully attending to their districts' interests, British MPs cannot expect to be rewarded for their efforts due to the strength of national forces in Great Britain (Mayhew, 1974; Stokes, 1975).

Nonetheless there are reasons to think that a comparison of constituency activities in Great Britain and the United States might be meaningful. To begin with, decisions about how to allocate scarce time and resources (including staff tasks) should be important to representatives in both countries. Time devoted to constituency affairs is costly in the sense that it is time which could have been spent on other private or public matters.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since these decisions have high opportunity costs, there should be reasons for why representatives do what they do. This implies systematic and potentially explicable patterns of behavior.

It is possible, however, that institutional differences prevent meaningful comparisons of constituency work in the U.S. and in the U.K. MPs, for example, have neither the staffs nor the budgets that their American counterparts have to carry out their constituency work (Mayhew, 1974), and party ties are demonstrably stronger in Great Britain than in the U.S. (Butler and Stokes, 1969). There are several responses to these objections. First, since MPs and Congressmen alike

must run in single member districts, there is an incentive in both systems to do what one can to increase support in one's district. Secondly, although the absence of large staffs in Great Britain might restrict the scope of constituency work, for the same reason, constituency service decisions may be more important to the Member. The reasoning behind this is that when constituency work must be done with very little staff, the opportunity costs of a given level of effort will be higher.

Institutional restrictions aside, are national forces in Great Britain so strong that constituency effort is meaningless? Not necessarily, for there is growing evidence that national forces have been in decline and the hitherto stable post war pattern of British politics may be changing: party identification with the Conservative and Labour parties has declined, regional variations have increased, class voting has weakened, and various anomalies in the uniform national swing have been noted (Crewe, 1974, 1979). More to the point, our own studies have shown that MPs who engaged in high levels of constituency service achieved better swings in the May 1979 General Election than did other MPs (Cain, 1980). Thus, it appears that national forces in Britain can be modified by the actions of individual candidates.

Finally, there is the consideration that the strength of the electoral incentive does not require that national forces be stronger than short term forces. Constituency work can be electorally beneficial even when the goal is restricted to winning votes at the margin: the greater the need to secure even a small margin of

security from adverse national swings, the greater the potential electoral gain from diligent constituency work.

The distinction between the objective and perceived values of constituency work is also important. The number of votes actually won by doing a lot of casework is a separate question from what representatives think they can win. The Congressman's or MP's estimate of the objective value of casework will often be uncertain. This uncertainty can lead to greater constituency effort if, being risk averse, representatives leave no stone unturned when it comes to protecting their careers. Elsewhere, we have considered the question of whether there is electoral benefit to constituency work (Cain, Ferejohn and Fiorina; 1979b). In this paper, we will consider whether this benefit accounts for the time and resources that MPs and Congressmen devote to their constituents.

Specifically, there are two questions to consider. First, how much and what kinds of constituency services do MPs as opposed to Congressmen provide, and secondly, what are the statistical determinants of these activities? The U.S. data comes from a survey we conducted in the summer of 1978 of 102 Congressional offices based on the sample of the CPS 1978 Congressional Election Study.<sup>2</sup> Our British sample is of 100 incumbent MPs and agents. It was collected in the summer following the 1979 General Election and is based on a sample of constituencies from our Gallup voter study.<sup>3</sup> We tried to make the questions in both studies as comparable as possible while at the same time remaining sensitive to important differences in institutions and terminology.

## COMPARING CONSTITUENCY ACTIVITIES IN THE U.S. AND THE U.K.

Constituency politics would matter little if it did not demand much of the representative's time and resources, so it is important to know how much and what kinds of activities American Congressmen and British MPs undertake. The fact that casework is a particularly important activity for both MPs and Congressman is evident from the number of cases they handle per week. These figures, displayed in Table I, indicate that Congressmen and their staffs have somewhat larger caseloads than do MPs. Fewer Congressmen than MPs fall into the 0-20 category, and many more fall into the 81-100 and 100+ categories. Of course, taking into account the fact that MPs represent constituencies which are approximately 1/5 the size of Congressional districts, and that they do not have comparable staff support, the MP's casework load is remarkably large.

[INSERT TABLE I HERE]

Most MPs have one or two personal secretaries, and some are aided in their constituency work by the local party's agent. All secretaries perform the clerical work associated with casework such as typing letters (although a few MPs proudly answer all letters in their own handwriting) and taking phone calls, but some are given the power to handle cases without the Member's personal supervision. When questioned about the amount of autonomy their secretaries had in dealing with cases, quite a few (49 percent) insisted that they directly supervised each case and that their secretaries had no autonomy whatsoever. Another 36 percent said their secretaries

TABLE I  
NUMBER OF CASES HANDLED PER WEEK

	Congressmen	MP's
≤20	9%	23%
21-40	28%	23%
41-60	18%	14%
61-80	6%	10%
81-100	14%	8%
100+	16%	3%
MV	10%	19%
N	102	100

sometimes handled cases without their direct supervision, and only 10 percent said that their secretaries frequently dealt with cases autonomously.

The other source of professional staff support is the local party agent. The agent's normal tasks are to help maintain the organization of the local party and to assist in the running of constituency election campaigns. Some agents help their MPs by screening cases during the week and arranging appointments for the weekend surgery (i.e. the designated time during the weekend when the MP meets with constituents to hear their complaints). Agents of ministers tend to do more screening than do agents of backbenchers, but whether agents undertake such work often depends on their personal relationship with the MP since it is not a formal duty: they are employees of the party and not of the Member directly. Perhaps for this reason, agents have more autonomy in dealing with cases than do secretaries: 16 percent of the agents as opposed to 9 percent of the secretaries were given a great deal of autonomy. Still, over half (56 percent) had little or no casework responsibility.

The substantial personal involvement of the MP stands in sharp contrast to the approach of most Congressmen. When asked to estimate the amount of time the Congressman personally spent on casework, 47 percent of our sample said that the Congressman rarely spent any time on casework, 18 percent said that the Congressman spent less than 10 percent of his time on casework, and only 9 percent said that the Congressman spent more than 10 percent of his time on casework (the rest did not know).

One might conclude from this that far from being a choice of little consequence, the decision about how much time to allocate to constituency affairs is very important for the MP—perhaps, even more so than for the Congressman—since it can involve much personal time and effort. When Members were asked how much time they devoted to all constituency matters—including casework—only 5 percent said that they spent 10 percent or less of their time, and only another 3 percent said that they spent between 11 percent and 20 percent of their time on constituency affairs. Most of them indicated that constituency affairs took a substantial amount of their time: 26 percent said that they spent between 21 percent and 40 percent of their time and 38 percent said that they spent between 41 percent and 60 percent of their time on constituency work. An additional 10 percent declined to give us numerical estimates or day by day descriptions but indicated that they spent a great deal or most of their time working on constituency matters.

#### ENTREPRENEURIAL CASEWORK ACTIVITIES

Nursing the constituency in Great Britain is sometimes called "grassrooting" or "parish pump politics". The entrepreneurial attitude some MPs have adopted towards their constituency work is best summed up by a communication from Kenneth Lomas, a former Labour MP from Huddersfield West:

To win, and hold my Constituency on four successive occasions meant 'Grass-Rooting' with a vengeance. Parliament took up four days a week, but the real work was done in the Constituency on

Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays. There was no such thing as a long, or short, Recess. Those precious days were used to help keep the Party machine working, in cheering on the troops, in perfecting the organization, and in making the news in my local paper at least four days a week.

By involving myself into virtually every organization in the town I gathered potential votes around me, and persuaded even those who would cast their vote against me, not to go out and canvas against me.

Lomas' "grassrooting" methods were calculated to achieve an explicitly electoral goal. How, one might ask, do the "grassrooting" methods of MPs and Congressmen compare?

One method of "grassrooting" is getting back to the constituency as frequently as possible. Being seen in the constituency at political and social functions contributes to the perception that the representative cares about his constituents and understands their problems. It also protects them against the charge of being aloof or not caring about their constituency. Judging from the responses in Table III MPs and Congressmen get back to their constituency quite often. The modal response in both countries was every weekend, although this was said more often in Great Britain than in the U.S. A higher percentage of MPs than Congressmen do return to their constituencies more than once a week, but most of these individuals live in or around London. While the smaller geographical area in Great Britain may partly account for these crossnational differences, one should bear in mind that trips to remote

constituencies in Great Britain can be long and time consuming. The important statistic is that over 80 percent of the U.S. Congressmen and 90 percent of the MPs get back to their constituencies at least twice a month. This suggests that representatives in both countries consider this to be very important.

[INSERT TABLE II HERE]

A second method of "grassrooting" is encouraging constituents to bring complaints and requests of all sorts to the representative or his staff. A certain number of cases will come to the MP or Congressman even if their services are not well advertised. Advertising will increase the caseload, and by so doing, increase the representative's contacts with individual citizens. As the representative handles more of his constituent's problems, he hopes that he will convert voters to support him, or at least, as Kenneth Loams put it, that he will persuade those "who would cast their vote against me, not to go out and canvas against me." In addition, advertising ombudsmen services in some general way contributes to the MP's or Congressman's reputation for being a good constituency man.

Not all MPs and Congressmen advertise their casework services. In our sample, 15 percent of the Congressmen and 36 percent of the MPs did not solicit cases. Among those who did, there were some crossnational differences in the mode of solicitation. Congressmen overwhelmingly prefer to encourage cases through radio, T.V., newspapers and newsletters whereas many MPs use more personalized methods such as touring neighborhoods, picking up cases at political and social functions, getting referrals through local party activists,

TABLE II  
COMPARISON OF VISITS BACK TO CONSTITUENCY

	Congressmen	Members
< 1 per month	4%	2%
1 per month	6%	3%
every 3rd. week	8%	5%
2 per month	31%	12%
3 per month	5%	14%
1 per week	41%	53%
More than 1 per week	4%	11%
Missing	1%	--
N	102	100

[INSERT TABLE III HERE]

and even, in some instances, knocking on doors to call on constituents individually. One plausible explanation for this difference is that the smaller size of British constituencies makes personal solicitation and word of mouth much more effective for the MP than it would be for most Congressmen. MPs also have less money to spend on mailings, and this factor is no doubt important too.

Another component of an effective constituency strategy is getting publicity for constituency work. Almost all MPs and Congressmen try to get publicity for projects that benefit the constituency or some significant segment of it, but the entrepreneurial representative will extend credit claiming to successful individual cases as well. However, others feel that publicizing individual cases is unnecessary and wrong. Sixty-eight percent of the Congressmen and 50 percent of the MPs we sampled took this position while 27 percent of the Congressmen and 50 percent of the MPs publicized individual cases.

Much has been said so far about the manner of handling cases, but little about the sorts of problems MPs and Congressmen deal with. Our surveys indicate that Congressmen received many of cases concerning social services, military and veteran problems, immigration and the IRS. MPs received requests for assistance on a wide range of problems, but the most frequent were housing, social services, taxation, legal problems and planning decisions. Enterprising representatives will take on cases of all sorts, including those which have nothing to do with the national government, whereas others will



TABLE III  
SOLICITATION OF CASES

	U.S.	U.K.
Solicits Individual Cases	85%	64%
Does not Solicit Individual Cases	15%	36%
M.V.	0	0

PUBLICIZING SUCCESSFUL CASES

	U.S.	U.K.
Publicizes Successful Casework	27%	50%
Does not Publicize Successful Casework	67%	50%
M.V.	6%	0

HANDLING OF LOCAL (OR STATE) CASES

	U.S.		U.K.
Handles Local (or State) Cases	42%	Local Cases are proper responsibility	50%
Never Handles Local (or State) Cases	53%	Handles reluctantly	33%
		Does not Handle Local Cases	17%
M.V.	5		0

carefully observe the boundaries of what they consider to be their national responsibilities. For example, housing in Great Britain falls within the jurisdiction of the local borough council and not the national government. Complaints about the waiting list for council homes or about the lack of repairs in council homes should really be referred to the local housing officer in the first instance, and then to the local councillor. In fact, many constituents will take their housing complaints directly to the MP, hoping that the MP's greater influence will increase their chances of a successful resolution. Some MPs discourage housing cases and routinely refer them to local councillors while others handle some proportion or even all of the housing cases that come to them. As Table III indicates, British MPs on the whole are somewhat less likely to observe local versus national distinctions than their Congressional counterparts. Whereas 54 percent of the Congressmen regularly referred state or local cases on to the appropriate state or local authority, only 17 percent of the MPs indicated that they would not handle local authority cases.

One peculiarly British institution deserves mention before turning to other matters: namely, the surgery. The surgery—so named because it resembles a doctor's office hours—is an opportunity for citizens to meet with the MP to discuss their problems and complaints. Surgeries have been used in the past as a rough indicator of the degree of an MP's constituency effort, but there are reasons to be suspicious of this measure by itself. MPs in rural constituencies maintain that surgeries are more useful in densely populated areas than in geographically dispersed areas, where it is not as easy for

constituents to get a designated location. A rural MP may be just as dedicated (as an urban MP) to his constituents but hold fewer surgeries. Bearing this in mind, we tried to determine how frequently MPs held surgeries. Only 9 percent of our sample said that they held no or infrequent surgeries. Eighty-nine percent of the sample held surgeries every month at least and 58 percent said that they held them every two weeks or more. This is further evidence of the heavy constituency involvement of MPs.

[INSERT TABLE IV HERE]

Switching from behavior to attitudes, we asked our respondents to evaluate the importance of casework as compared to other aspects of their job. Over 70 percent in both countries said that casework was a very high—or even the highest—priority, and less than 5 percent said that it was not important at all. A significant number of MPs fell into the middle category of saying that while casework was important, it was less important than their duties on the floor and in committees. Various reasons were cited to justify the importance of casework, but MPs were most likely to say things such as it helped them keep in touch with their constituents, it gave them personal satisfaction and it was an important duty of being an MP. The A.A.s could only tell us what they thought the Congressmen believed and many could not do that (63 percent). However, those who could gave reasons which were not all that dissimilar from what the British MPs had said; namely, personal satisfaction, the Congressman's duty, keeping in touch with constituents and the like.

TABLE IV  
SURGERIES

None	4%	Every Month	25%
Ad hoc basis	3%	Every 3 weeks	6%
2 or 3 per year	2%	2 per month	32%
Every other month	2%	3 per month	11%
		Every Week or more	15%

Asked about the potential benefits of casework, over 80 percent of both samples said that casework had definite electoral benefits. Only 2 percent of the British sample and 6 percent of the U.S. sample said that casework had no electoral payoff. Most MPs were quite realistic about what they could hope to gain by their efforts in the constituency even though many were uncertain about exactly how great the electoral benefit would be. Usually, they would refer to the conventional wisdom that being a good constituency man meant one or two percentage points or tell us about their experiences in previous elections.

#### MODELING ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES

Our examination of how much and what kinds of activities MPs as opposed to Congressmen undertake in their constituencies has shown that MPs actually invest a considerable amount of time and effort into their constituency work, even by American standards. We will now turn to the question of whether the factors influencing constituency effort are really so different in Great Britain and the U.S.? To do this, we need to identify the casework entrepreneurs and their motives. One plausible hypothesis is that the incentive to adopt an aggressive constituency style will depend on the Congressmen's or MP's electoral margin. Those in marginal seats should feel more insecure about their position and therefore have a greater need to do what they can to make it safer. Conversely, those in safe as opposed to marginal seats should value the electoral benefits of constituency work less and the opportunity costs more. It is, of course, possible that the

incumbent's perception of closeness might not perfectly correspond with actual circumstances, but it is reasonable to assume that more individuals in seats with small as opposed to large majorities will believe their seats marginal. The idea then is that Congressmen and MPs have expectations about the closeness of the upcoming race which are based on the result of the previous election. Those who won close races in the last election will be more likely to view their seats as unsafe and undertake measures to consolidate their positions.

A second variable in this model controls for the year in which the incumbent was first elected to the seat. There are two interpretations which can be given to this variable. The first is that it measures some cohort effect such as a shift in the behavioral patterns of Congressmen and MPs elected after a certain date: for instance, it is possible that Congressmen elected after 1964 or MPs elected after 1970 have adopted more aggressive constituency strategies than their predecessors. Alternatively, this variable may measure a life cycle phenomenon in the sense that the need to establish oneself in the seat may always be greater among the newly elected in every cohort group. Unfortunately, we cannot distinguish between these interpretations with our cross-sectional data and must leave the issue unresolved for the present.

The third variable is the Congressman's or MP's party. Party differences can be caused by ideological differences: for instance, Conservative MPs or Republican Congressmen may be less inclined to help their constituents take advantage of the welfare state than Labour MPs or Democratic Congressmen. Alternatively, the natural

constituencies of the left and the right may place different demands upon their representatives: working class individuals may need Ombudsman services more than middle class individuals. Either or both of these phenomena would lead us to expect that casework entrepreneurs were more likely to be Democrats or Labourites than Republicans or Conservatives.

The model then can be summarized as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + B_1M_{t-1} + B_2P + B_3E + u$$

where Y = casework activities

$M_{t-1}$  = lagged marginality

P = party (Conservative or Republicans)

E = year incumbent elected to seat.

The casework activities to be explained with the U.S. data are whether an effort was made to publicize successful casework in the media or newsletters, whether state or local cases were handled by the Congressman's staff or referred to state or local agencies and legislators, whether an effort was made to solicit more casework from constituents, and how much attention the Congressman devoted personally to casework. The ordinal nature of these variables calls for the use of a probit procedure.<sup>4</sup>

The results of the U.S. estimations are displayed in Table V. The top row of the table lists the four dependent variables and the column to the left the independent variables and the relevant statistics. As a general observation, lagged marginality seems to be the best predictor in the sense of having statistically significant and

properly signed coefficients. By contrast, party does not predict well in any equation and has the wrong sign in one. Overall, the model works best for the solicitation of cases and personal attention variables. Congressmen in close seats are more likely to solicit casework and personally involve themselves in casework than those in safe seats. This is what was expected. The coefficients on the year elected variables do not conform as neatly to expectations. Although recently elected Congressmen are more likely to solicit cases, they do not devote more personal attention to casework. Indeed, the opposite appears to hold; namely, the longer the years of service, the more likely it is that the Congressman will be personally involved in casework. Perhaps, this indicates a heavier reliance on staff by the newer members of Congress.

[INSERT TABLE V HERE]

Judging from the size of the standard errors, party differences do not seem to matter much in determining casework practices. Nonetheless, it is interesting that Republicans are generally less likely to pursue aggressive constituency strategies than Democrats (with the possible exception of solicitation of cases).

The handling of local cases and the publicity equations fare less well than the other two. The estimated  $R^2$  are extremely low and almost none of the coefficients are significant. The lone exception is lagged marginality, and it does have the predicted negative sign. However, marginality is not significant in the publicity equation, and a likely reason for this is that some Congressional offices regard the publication of a successful case as exploitative and a violation of

TABLE V

## DETERMINENTS OF CASEWORK ACTIVITIES -- (U.S.)

	Solicits Cases	Personal Attention by Congressmen to Cases	Handles Local Cases	Publicizes Successful Cases
Margin in 1976	-.024* (.012)	-.036* (.015)	-.017* (.010)	-.003 (.010)
Party	+.34 (.42)	-.06 (.36)	-.35 (.28)	-.31 (.30)
Yr. Elected	.058* (.024)	-.065* (.025)	-.006 (.021)	.040 (.026)
Constant	-.85 (2.00)	7.22 (2.39)	1.27 (1.85)	-3.82 2.19
Chi squared	17	9	3	3
R <sup>2</sup>	.31	.26	.05	.07
n	102	55	96	95
Procedure: Probit				

\* p &lt; .05 (Z-test)

the citizen's privacy. The signs of the other coefficients indicate that Democrats are somewhat more likely than Republicans to publicize casework and handle local cases, and that newly elected Congressmen handle fewer local cases, but are more likely to publicize successful results.

While this model seems to predict the casework practices of Congressional offices well, it predicts Congressional resource allocations better. In Table VI, the same model is applied to four new dependent variables: the number of the Congressional staff in the district office, the number of district offices, the number of caseworkers on the staff and the ratio of district to Washington staff. The first and fourth variables are obviously highly related, but since Congressmen do not always use their full allotment, they are not identical. Since these are cardinal variables, we can apply simple OLS techniques. As before, the dependent variables in Table VI are listed across the top and the independent variables down the column. For the most part, the results in these equations are consistent with those in the previous equations. The major differences are that there are fewer sign reversals and more statistically significant coefficients. The model best fits the district staff and the closely related ratio of district to Washington staff equations. In both cases, all the coefficients are statistically significant and properly signed: those in marginal seats, the recently elected and the Democrats are more likely to have larger district staffs and a higher district to Washington to staff ratio. The model also fits the caseworker equation well. By contrast, the district offices equation

is less successful. Neither the year elected nor the party variable coefficients are significant and the sign in the latter instance is not what we predicted.

[INSERT TABLE VI HERE]

What in summary do the U.S. equations tell us. They seem to indicate that the newly elected, those in marginal seats and Democrats allocate more resources to constituency service and are more likely to engage in various casework activities. At the same time, we noted that the model fits the resource allocation variables somewhat better than it does casework activities. Indeed, separating the personal attention variable from the other three, we can make the following observation: namely, the model seems to apply better to decisions made by the Congressman personally than it does to the the choice of casework practices, which may partly reflect the organizational and personal biases of the staff. Whether to be involved in casework and how to use the Congressional allotment are presumably decisions Congressmen make for themselves and should therefore directly reflect their motives and circumstances. The procedures which have evolved for the day to day handling of cases on the other hand may reflect these interests somewhat less clearly.

The electoral incentive is evident in the American data, but is it evident in the British data as well? Parliamentary staff allocations cannot be analyzed in any meaningful way for the obvious reason that the limitations on staff are so severe that there is too little variation. However, we can model the casework activities of Members, and the four we will focus on are whether the MP solicits

TABLE VI  
RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS OF STAFF AND OFFICES -- U.S.

	District Staff	District Offices	Caseworkers	District Staff/ Washington Staff
Margin in 1976	-.049* (.017)	-.005 (.007)	-.034* (.013)	-.006* (.003)
Party	1.82* (.48)	-.076 (.206)	1.32* (.37)	.32* (.09)
Yr. elected	.082* (.034)	.047* (.014)	.048 <sup>†</sup> (.027)	.013* (.006)
Constant	2.63	-.90	2.49	.08
R <sup>2</sup>	.22	.13	.17	.16
n	102	102	102	102
Procedure	OLS			

\* p < .05 (t-test)

† p < .10

additional casework, whether the Member publicizes successful cases for credit claiming purposes, whether the Member handles local cases or refers them to local officers and councillors, and whether the Member holds surgeries more than twice per month. The estimation procedure is n-chotomous probit as before.

The results of these estimations are given in Table VII. The first thing to notice is that the model fits the British data as well, and perhaps slightly better, than the U.S. data: party differences are more important and the sign of the year elected variable is always positive. The estimated  $R^2$  are somewhat higher and the overall chi squareds do not fail in any instance. Marginality is no less important in Great Britain than it is in the U.S.: the marginality coefficient is statistically significant in three out of four instances. The model best predicts whether the Member handles or refers local government cases and whether the Member holds more than two surgeries a month. The signs of the coefficients indicate that those in close seats, the recently elected and the Labour Members are more likely to undertake these activities. The model also seems to predict publicity of casework reasonably well although the party sign is the opposite of what was expected (indicating that Conservatives are more likely than Labourites to publicize their casework activities). This brings to mind a complaint we heard from several MPs who thought that they were not able to publicize successful casework as much as they would have liked to because the local press was unsympathetic to them. Perhaps, the attitude of the press to the Member is the crucial factor here.

[INSERT TABLE VII HERE]

In general, the constituency activities of British MPs appear to be systematically related to various factors.<sup>5</sup> Most importantly, the electoral incentive is as evident in the British data as it is in the U.S. data. The fact that the models of casework activities fit the British data slightly better than the U.S. data is consistent with our earlier finding that the model applies to the Congressional resource allocation decisions more than to the casework activities of Congressional staff: that is, since MPs must deal with casework without the aid of large staffs, their practices will reflect their interests and circumstances more directly than the practices of Congressional staffs will reflect those of Congressmen.

Aside from the variables in the basic model, we also attempted to test two alternative explanations of casework. One is whether MPs do casework because they derive intrinsic satisfaction from doing so. A number of MPs indicated that they thought casework important because it helped them to keep in touch with their constituents, or that it was the only way they found they could be effective in Parliament, or that it enabled them to see how legislation passed by Parliament affected citizens, or simply that it gave them personal satisfaction to help a citizen with a problem. Any mention of these nonelectoral reasons was coded into a dummy variable which was then included in the estimation. To our surprise, this variable did not prove to be statistically related to any of the dependent variables.

Another plausible hypothesis is that Members undertake high levels of constituency service in order to please their local party

TABLE VII  
DETERMINANTS OF CASEWORK ACTIVITIES -- (UK)

	Solicits Cases	Publicizes Successful Cases	Handles Local Cases	Frequency of Surgeries
Margin in 1974	-.012 (.011)	-.026* (.013)	-.019* (.010)	-.02* (.01)
Party	-.68* (.28)	.18 (.32)	-.10 (.24)	-.66* (.30)
Yr. elected	.01 (.01)	.021* (.012)	.05* (.01)	.03 (.02)
Constant	.19 (.91)	-.62 (.95)	-1.71* (1.04)	-1.86 (1.52)
Chi squared	8 (3 d.f.)	8 (3 d.f.)	18 (3 d.f.)	11 (3 d.f.)
R <sup>2</sup>	.13	.15	.25	.23
n	100	76	100	94
Procedure: Probit				

\* p < .05 (Z-test)

activists. Two attempts were made to measure this variable: one was to use a question which asked whether the Member thought that constituency work contributed to the morale of the local party, and the other, a question about whether the Member had been asked by the adoption committee to live in the constituency. The assumption behind the second measure was that demands of this sort would reveal activist interest in the Member's constituency role. However, neither measure proved to be statistically significant when entered into the equation. We would caution the reader against drawing a firm conclusion from these results. Obviously, the phenomena of intrinsic benefits and party pressures are very difficult to measure, and we are not completely satisfied with the measures we had at hand. The question of the importance of such factors remains open, though our analyses suggest that intrinsic benefit and party pressure are not the principal determinants of service activity.

#### CONCLUSION

Constituency service consumes significant amounts of the representative's time and resources in both Great Britain and the U.S.. MPs and Congressmen handle large amounts of casework and look after their constituency's interests in various ways. Differences in staff matter, but not exactly in the way one might think. The average MP must devote more of his or her own time to constituent affairs than the average Congressman, and consequently the opportunity costs are higher for MPs. Variations in constituency work in both countries seem to follow systematic patterns. In particular, marginality, party



and the year elected are variously related to casework activities and staff resource allocations. Surprisingly, the relationship between these variables and casework activities is somewhat larger in Great Britain than in the U.S., and we have suggested that this is because these activities are not mediated by large staffs in the U.K.

The key point, however, is that despite important cultural and historical differences, the existence of single member simple plurality rules in both countries creates a similar incentive for Congressmen and MPs; namely, the need to establish personal support in their constituency. To be sure, the strength of national party ties and various institutional differences will limit the impact of these efforts on electoral outcomes: the absence of strong committees and pork barrel opportunities in Great Britain is a good example of this point. However, credit claiming by casework is an opportunity available to all representatives in advanced industrial states because of the growth of the welfare state and the inevitable tensions which arise between citizens and bureaucrats. Ombudsman work has certain desirable invariant features which make it politically attractive: it is noncontroversial, generally appreciated and helps create a positive image in the home district. It is not surprising therefore that this role is so important for both MPs and Congressmen.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Some might contend that the MP has nothing better to do with his or her time than casework. From the perspective of the Members we interviewed, this is not true. Many MPs indicated to us that constituency work competed for time with such things as being with their families on the weekends, committee meetings, participation in debate and the administrative chores of being in the government or the shadow cabinet. The distinction between the objective and subjective value of time should not be ignored.
2. The CPS 1978 Congressional study sampled in 108 districts. We were able to secure interviews with staff in 102 out of the 108 districts. There is an obvious asymmetry between interviewing the staff in the U.S. case and the MP in the British case which must be considered when making comparisons across these two data sets.
3. The Gallup study samples 133 districts. During 1978 and 1979, we interviewed 146 MPs and agents, including some MPs and agents in the same constituencies and some in constituencies not sampled by Gallup. In this paper, we have excluded agent interviews in constituencies where we had interviewed the MPs, interviews with the newly elected and interviews with those outside the original Gallup sample. This gives us 100 observations: 68 MPs and 32 agents.

4. The categorical nature of our dependent variables violates the assumptions of standard regression analysis. Specifically, heteroskedasticity results in biased estimates of the standard errors of the estimated coefficients. Various alternatives are available. The one chosen in this work is an n-chotomous probit procedure developed by McKelvey and Zavoina (1975). It is a generalization of ordinary probit based on the assumption that the dependent variable has at least ordinal characteristics. The procedure produces maximum likelihood parameter estimates as well as estimates of thresholds on the (unobserved) continuous dependent variable. Those thresholds are assumed to determine the correspondence between the observed discrete categories and a range of values on the underlying unobserved variable. Hypothesis testing is straightforward, but the goodness of fit measures are less so. In the tables we report  $\hat{R}^2$ , an analogue to the familiar  $R^2$  of standard regression analysis. The former is intended as an estimate of the latter, and is obtained by substituting the observed categorical values for the unobserved values and using an estimate of the residual sum of squares. The sampling distribution of  $\hat{R}^2$  is unknown. For further information see Richard McKelvey and William Zavoina, "A Statistical Model for the Analysis of Ordinal Level Dependent Variables," Journal of Mathematical Sociology 4 (1975: 103-120).
5. We had thought earlier that a control for the perception that casework mattered might be important. Further testing indicated that this control was not important.

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